

Mid-Region Council of Governments 2006 Annual Report



Photo Illustration by Marti Niman/NMDOT

communities working together

a Letter from the MRCOG Board Chair



M. Steven Anaya, MRCOG Past Chair

It has been my sincere pleasure to serve as chairman of the Mid-Region Council of Governments for the past two years. I have witnessed elected officials come together as a region to work diligently for their respective governments and communities, and to find solutions for the many complex issues facing our region.

The Rail Runner project has successfully linked the communities of Albuquerque, Los Ranchos and the Town of Bernalillo. In the next few months, the City of Belen, the Village of Los Lunas and the Village of Bosque Farms will be accessible by train. I am proud to be a part of this enormous project that will move New Mexico into the future.

The Economic Development of our region will no doubt be impacted by the new choices for commuters, and the accomplishments of the many other great programs MRCOG oversees, which will further strengthen our state.

I would like to wish the best of luck to Commissioner Leonard as he takes over the gavel. There are vast challenges ahead of us, but with the strength and cooperation of our leadership and the skills of the staff, we can continue to build on our achievements.

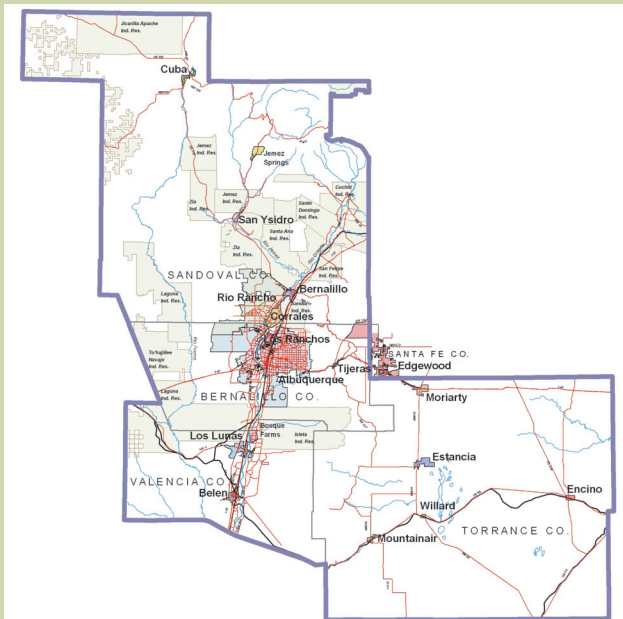
M. Steven Anaya

a Biography of the Incoming MRCOG Board of Directors Chair

DON LEONARD is a lifelong resident of New Mexico, particularly the North Valley and Corrales. Don, or "Donnie," as most people call him, is a small-business owner and an active community member. His election to the office of Sandoval County Commissioner is Donnie's first time in public office, and he is very excited about it. His goals are to be of service, solve problems, and get things done to make the region a better place in which to live and work. Donnie describes himself as a good listener and someone who believes in working together with others to solve problems.



DON LEONARD, New MRCOG Board Chair



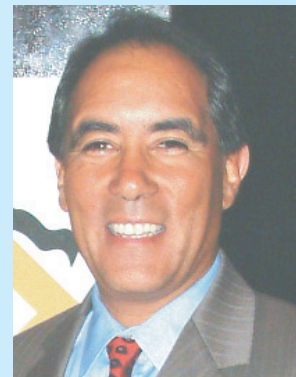
The Mid-Region Council of Governments is comprised of city and county governments and special units of government.

Municipal and county government agencies in Bernalillo, Sandoval, Torrance, and Valencia Counties, plus Edgewood in Santa Fe County, are members, as well as groups like Albuquerque Public Schools and the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District.

Elected and appointed representatives of these organizations serve on MRCOG's Board of Directors and provide direction for the organization.

a Letter from MRCOG's Executive Director

This past year was filled with many "firsts" for the Mid-Region Council of Governments. It strikes me as amusing, if not ironic, that last year at this time one of our most notable accomplishments was the move to our new building. This year, it is not a "move", but rather a "moving thing" that is capturing first billing. In mid-July, the Mid-Region Council of Governments along with the New Mexico Department of Transportation, successfully helped bring commuter rail to the heart of the Rio Grande Valley. The New Mexico Rail Runner Express kicked off its inaugural run with more than 4,700 people on board.



This project has brought the region together. As a result of the collaboration, the Mid-Region Transit District (RTD) was created as a means to continue to work on public transportation alternatives for residents throughout the region.

When Governor Bill Richardson cut the ribbon at the US 550/Sandoval County station, it signified a new era in transportation for the people of New Mexico, as well as the culmination of more than two years of hard work and dedication on the part of MRCOG staffers. It is now time to focus efforts on the next level - Phase II: service from Bernalillo to Santa Fe.

Among the many other MRCOG endeavors of note: a collaborative ongoing effort centered on keeping one of New Mexico's natural treasures pristine for generations to come. In cooperation with the New Mexico Office of Natural Resources Trustee and the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, MRCOG conducted a Bosque Restoration Project in Valencia County. Approximately 70 acres of bosque land were cleared of non-native vegetation that soak up much of our limited water supply, and also create a tinderbox for fires. Similarly, a project that would integrate 40 miles of trails along the bosque right through the middle of the valley is starting to take shape. The Rio Grande Bosque Trail Project will provide recreation and alternative transportation opportunities to the smaller communities along the middle Rio Grande from Belen to the Town of Bernalillo.

Another high point came back in April when a federal transportation review team commended the MRCOG's transportation staff for the way it conducted the metropolitan transportation planning process - especially their efforts and expertise regarding bicycle and pedestrian planning, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS).

The New Mexico Workforce Connection One-Stop Centers are another bragging point. Regional One-stop Centers are now following suit with the Belen One-Stop, which has successfully managed to offer services of 19 other agencies designed to help businesses find skilled workers, and help job seekers gain much-needed education and training.

From the workforce to agriculture, our Agribusiness Taskforce has been busy promoting area farmers markets and assisting local farmers in finding markets for their locally grown products. These markets not only provide a venue for fresh and delicious local produce, but they are also fun for the whole family.

Another significant step for the COG has taken place in our water planning efforts. Within just two months, the Mid-Region Basin has formed through a resolution a collaboration with the Estancia Basin to provide long term planning and water resources in the region.

Once again, MRCOG's leadership role on regional issues continues to expand to new frontiers. As evident in this report, we take to heart with each of our programs, that our mission is to transcend the boundaries that separate individual communities, and enhance opportunities to create partnerships for the good of all residents of the region.

Lawrence Rael

A Picture of our Region's Future

For more than a year the data analysts at MRCOG have been assembling information in order to develop a new set of socioeconomic projections for the 2030 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). These projections contain information about anticipated population, housing, and employment growth out to the year 2030. MRCOG's projections are valuable predictors of growth because they are guided by the most current available information regarding land use plans and policy, and because they provide data at the Data Analysis Subzone (DASZ) level, the smallest level of geography available for projections in the region.

MRCOG staff members conducted a series of face-to-face discussions with local government officials, planners, developers and consultants. Emerging from their discussions were two important issues:

- Current development activity
- Future growth expectations

These discussions coupled with local plans, policy and zoning information have allowed MRCOG to compose a solid picture of anticipated near-term growth to the year 2015, and a long-term forecast to 2030.

One current development trend brought to light was the emergence of "active adult living communities": residences that cater to seniors and offer the kinds of amenities desirable to the 55 - 65 plus population. The combination of an aging baby boomer generation, longer

life spans, and New Mexico's growing reputation as an attractive retirement destination have created a market for these developments.

Other increasingly popular options for homebuyers are loft living and residential infill developments. A prime example is the conversion of several buildings in East Downtown Albuquerque (Edo) into residential lofts and ground floor commercial uses, enhanced by an attractive streetscape. Further revitalization efforts can be seen in Downtown Belen and Albuquerque's Sawmill Neighborhood. These types of developments are beneficial to the region because they generally tie into transit routes, basic amenities are within walking distance, and empty lots and blighted areas are transformed into appealing areas in which to live and work.

The unveiling of future growth plans throughout this process exemplified the importance of taking a regional approach to planning for development. At this time, there are roughly 210,000 new homes being considered for Master Planned Communities. Although these planned communities are geographically separate from other developments, they will share the region's roadway network, affect regional air quality, and rely on the regional water supply. Given the limitations of natural resources and growing traffic congestion, it is critical that planners and developers are mindful of, and plan for, the potential regional implications of these individual developments.



Projected Growth 2000 to 2030

Source: US Census
Bureau, Bureau of
Business and Economic
Research

	2030 Projection	Numeric Growth	Percent Growth
Bernalillo	759,000	202,322	36%
Sandoval	197,182	107,274	119%
Torrance	27,479	10,568	62%
Valencia	128,922	62,770	95%
4- County	1,112,583	382,934	52%



Mid-Region Council of Governments
of New Mexico

Preservation of the Río Grande Bosque

MRCOG, in cooperation with the New Mexico Office of Natural Resources Trustee and the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, has been carrying out a Bosque Restoration Program in the middle valley of the Rio Grande at several locations in Sandoval County, Bernalillo County, and most recently, Valencia County.

The Bosque Restoration Program goals are:

- 1) Removal of non-native, high water consumption vegetation to ultimately save water that would be lost to evapotranspiration
- 2) Reduction of wildfire fuel loading due to the long term build-up of Bosque vegetation.

To date, approximately 320 acres have been treated through the restoration program. Clearing the Bosque is crucial at this time of extremely dry conditions that have prevailed in this area over the past several years.



MRCOG Executive Director Lawrence Rael, New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson, and Martin Heinrich, NM Office of Natural Resources Trustee at a Bosque Restoration news conference in March of 2006.

Rio Grande Trail Extension Project



Before long, residents in the middle Rio Grande region will be able to use one beautiful, multi-use trail along the Rio Grande from Belen to Bernalillo. MRCOG has taken the lead on this multi-jurisdictional project with the strong support of Sandoval and Valencia Counties. Designed as a system that will serve the entire region, the Rio Grande Bosque Trail Project will provide recreation and alternative transportation opportunities to the smaller communities along the middle Rio Grande.

Possible alignments are currently being identified and evaluated with assistance of consultants Sites Southwest/Bohannon Huston Joint Venture. Field work and meetings with communities and interested agencies have helped to identify opportunities and issues along the corridor between Belen and Bernalillo.

The goal is to begin construction on the first segment of the trail, about 3 miles along the river in Rio Rancho, in 2006, in a partnership with the City of Rio Rancho and the Friends of Rio Rancho Open Space. Other pilot or demonstration projects in Valencia County will be selected for construction with the current funding as the alternative analysis is completed and the complex multi-jurisdictional issues are addressed.



The Water Resources Board



The Rio Grande



A. Terese Ulivarri, MRGWRB Chair



Drainage Ditch

The Middle Rio Grande Water Resources Board has been expanded to include representation from all four counties that comprise the MRCOG. As the principal advisory body to the MRCOG Board of Directors, the Water Resources Board provides guidance and recommends policies on water-related issues. The WRB also advocates the Regional Water Plans for the Middle Rio Grande as well as the Estancia Basins.

Currently, the board's focus is on the development and implementation of water conservation plans for local governments, including emergency water shortage plans and water waste ordinances.

MRCOG's Agribusiness Program Gets Growing



MRCOG's Agribusiness Program has been helping local agriculture by promoting area farmers' markets and assisting local farmers in finding markets for their locally grown products. In addition to monthly task force meetings, MRCOG will begin working to increase the number of customers and sales at the 12 farmers' markets in the region (see below for a market near you).

These markets not only provide a venue for fresh and delicious local produce (ripe peaches, sun-kissed tomatoes, and peppery arugula) but they are also fun for the whole family. Each market tries to provide a variety of activities for children and adults, including face-painting and fun jumps, and food sampling from local restaurants for adults. Thanks to support from several MRCOG member governments (City of Albuquerque, Sandoval and Bernalillo Counties, for starters), as well as the McCune Charitable Foundation, the MRCOG will continue to do its part to support the markets and the farmers who sell their wonderful produce there.

Any way you slice it, farmers' markets are a good choice.

Find a Farmers' Market Nearest You:

Belen Growers' Market • Bernalillo Farmers' Market • Cedar Crest Farmers' and Arts Market
Central Albuquerque Market • Corrales Growers' Market • Downtown Albuquerque Market
Edgewood Farmers' Market • Los Ranchos Growers' Market • Los Ranchos Winter Market
Moriarty Farmers' Market • Nob Hill Growers' Market • South Valley Growers' Market

For specific locations, hours and dates of operation, please check agbz.net



6 Farmers' Market in Albuquerque's Robinson Park



New Mexican Apples and Red Chile Ristras

New 2006 Orthophotography has Improved Resolution

Much of central New Mexico has been captured in brand new aerial photos this past spring. This digital orthophotography project was coordinated by MRCOG. 18 local government agencies were involved in the project which cost close to a half-million dollars. Agency contributions ranged from five thousand dollars to the 200 thousand dollar contribution from the New Mexico Department of Transportation.

The project covers 1,850 square miles in southern Sandoval County, Bernalillo County, and central Valencia County. The six-inch pixel resolution enables users to see objects on the ground with excellent detail and clarity.

The digital imagery is used with geographic information technology for a wide variety of applications including planning, property assessment,

geographic data maintenance, and facilities and resource management. Through this cooperative effort, users were able to acquire critical base data for a large area with a minimum outlay of funds. MRCOG's goal is to acquire updated digital orthophotography for the region every two years.

Project cooperators included: Albuquerque Metropolitan Arroyo Flood Control Authority, Bernalillo County, City of Albuquerque, Isleta Pueblo, Kirtland AFB, Village of Los Lunas, MRCOG, Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, NMDOT, Public Service Company of New Mexico, City of Rio Rancho, Sandia National Laboratory, Sandia Pueblo, Sandoval County, Santa Ana Pueblo, Southern Sandoval County Arroyo Flood Control Authority, US Geological Survey, and Valley Improvement Association.

The reconstructed I-40/Cools Interchange

Local Government Planning

Professional planning assistance is a primary commitment of MRCOG to its member governments to maintain an effective organization and process for community planning in the region. During the past year, MRCOG staff completed comprehensive plans for Valencia County and the Village of Bosque Farms; and similar Plans are in progress for the municipalities of Jemez Springs and Edgewood. Additionally, MRCOG conducted the annual MRCOG Planning Commissioners Workshop in September 2005, and a special Land Grant Workshop was convened in November 2005. An audio/web workshop presented by the American Planning Association was hosted by MRCOG and conducted in January and March of 2006. MRCOG staff also provided assistance to local government planners in drafting regulations, facilitating public meetings, preparing applications for funding, and conducting technical research and analysis.



Tome Land Grant Plaque

Commuter Rail Phase I - On Track!

After more than two years of planning, negotiations, design and construction, the New Mexico Rail Runner Express began service on July 14th of this year. MRCOG served as agent for the NMDOT for the implementation of this project and many of the MRCOG board members participated directly in the project development process through the MRCOG Commuter Rail Task Force. This group provided useful insight as the project progressed. While at times it seemed as though this project was moving along rather slowly, in reality this was the fastest commuter rail start up in the nation over the past 20 years! Commuter rail start ups typically take between seven and 10 years.

Rail Runner currently serves the Sandoval County/U.S. 550, Los Ranchos/Journal Center and Downtown Albuquerque stations. Service will be extended to Los Lunas and Belen later this year.

On its first day of service, word about the Rail Runner had already spread to such a degree that the mid-day train provided standing room only! For the afternoon trains, two extra passenger cars were added to accommodate all the people eager to ride

the Rail Runner. Passengers' reactions were overwhelmingly positive, getting the Rail Runner off to a great start.

On July 17th, a host of guests and dignitaries representing agencies and businesses involved in the development of the commuter rail system joined Governor Bill Richardson for a ceremonial Rail Runner opening. Festivities started at the Sandoval County/US 550 station in Bernalillo, continued on to the Los Ranchos/Journal Center Station, and culminated at the Alvarado Transportation Center in Downtown Albuquerque.

Major milestones that were critical to the implementation of Rail Runner service this past year:

- Delivery of the five locomotives and 10 cars ordered for Phase I
- Completion of negotiations with the BNSF for the sale of the line from Belen to the Colorado state line
- Construction of train stations
- Development of a service schedule and fare policy
- Implementation of new connecting bus services

check out nmrailrunner.com



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: The official opening of the Rail Runner on July 17th. Shown are (left to right) Mayor Kevin Jackson of Rio Rancho, Mayor Martin Chavez of Albuquerque, NM Governor Bill Richardson, NM Attorney General Patricia Madrid, NM Secretary of Transportation Rhonda Faught, Federal Railroad Administrator Joseph H. Boardman, Representative Ben Lujan Speaker of the House - NM House of Representatives, MRCOG Executive Director Lawrence Rael.

MIDDLE: Soon to be a very familiar sight: Rail Runner trains arriving at and departing from the Alvarado Transportation Center in Downtown ALB. LEFT: Crowds of people waiting to catch the Rail Runner in Albuquerque

The Rail Runner and Transit Oriented Development

MRCOG will be undertaking a study with communities along the Rail Runner line to develop ways to maximize the positive economic, land use, and transportation benefits of the new commuter train. This grant will be used to plan for transit oriented development (TOD) in station areas.

TOD is a specific approach to land use planning that focuses on transit and emphasizes pedestrian-friendly developments that integrate residential land uses with employment and retail services. As shown across the nation, TODs can be used to redevelop and revitalize downtown areas, or to establish new TOD "villages" .



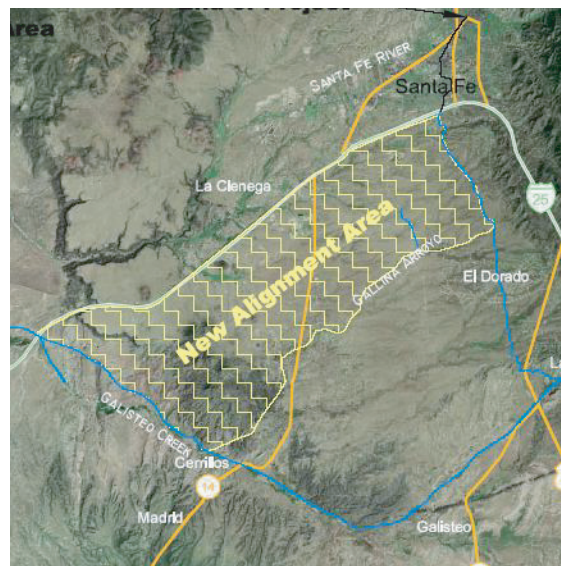
Commuter Rail Phase II - Onward!

With Phase I of the Rail Runner project well underway, there's little time to waste getting started on Phase II which will extend service north to Santa Fe. While two years may seem like a long time, consider how much had to be accomplished in the last two years to get train-to-track.

Last fall, MRCOG, the New Mexico Department of Transportation and URS Greiner (a nationally recognized consulting firm) finished the first part of the Phase II effort, with a nine month study evaluating a variety of alternative transportation connections between Albuquerque and Santa Fe. The "Albuquerque to Santa Fe Alternatives Analysis" looked at options ranging from commuter rail, to expanded bus service in the corridor, to adding another lane to the interstate. It concluded that commuter rail service ranked tops as the most viable option for improving mobility between Albuquerque and Santa Fe for a number of reasons:

- Provides cost-effective transportation
- Provides travel time reliability (approximately 1 hour 15 min from Downtown Albuquerque to Downtown Santa Fe)
- Maintains sensitivity to Native American lands in the corridor
- Supports access to/development of cities and towns in the corridor
- Minimizes environmental impacts

The study suggested using the existing line to La Bajada (blue line on map), and a new track alignment (yellow corridor on map). The service would use upgraded tracks on the existing Santa Fe Southern Line (in black) between I-25 and downtown Santa Fe.



The report also found that if no transportation services or improvements are implemented in the Albuquerque to Santa Fe corridor, one way peak period auto travel times are expected to increase to more than two hours by the year 2025!

Since the Alternatives Analysis was completed, MRCOG and the NMDOT have focused on the development of alternative track alignments (yellow area on map). This includes evaluating alternatives from many different perspectives including engineering, environmental, performance, cost and benefits, and potential impacts. The goal is to have a preferred alignment selected by the end of this year, followed by final design and construction, bringing actual commuter rail service to Santa Fe by December of 2008. MRCOG will continue in its role as agent for the NMDOT on this next phase of the project.



Metropolitan Transportation Planning

Triennial Certification Review

MRCOG is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Albuquerque Metropolitan Area. As such, MRCOG's metropolitan transportation program is reviewed every three years by federal transportation agencies. In April, representatives of the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, and the Environmental Protection Agency met with MRCOG transportation staff and New Mexico Department of Transportation personnel for a three-day review of the planning process.

The transportation staff presented a comprehensive overview of the MPO's activities during the prior three years, describing the roles and responsibilities of member agencies and staff. The federal review team commended the staff for their technical expertise, especially with regard to bicycle and pedestrian planning and Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and for efforts toward implementation of commuter rail.

The final report from the review team is expected sometime in August. Once completed, the federal team will present its findings to the Metropolitan Transportation Board. The next federally-required certification review will take place early in 2010.

2030 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)

A Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is a tool for helping people in a specific metropolitan area determine goals for an integrated and intermodal transportation system. It is also a guide for determining the long-range and short-range transportation investment strategies needed to achieve those goals. Based on a number of factors including projected growth, community comprehensive plans, and the resulting challenges for mobility, the plan identifies what roads need to be built or improved, as well as what transit, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities need to be developed or improved. Perhaps the biggest overriding questions when considering all of these factors is "How will all these modes of transportation work together?"

MRCOG is nearing completion of the next long-range plan, the 2030 MTP, which is expected to be approved this fall. Population and employment growth forecasts have been updated, and more than 40 public briefings and meetings have been held over the past 18 months. New in this MTP are transportation security issues which will be coordinated with federal, state, and local homeland security and emergency operations plans.

The 2030 MTP is expected to set priorities for more than \$4 billion in projects and programs. The following goals, developed through public participation and guidance from the Metropolitan Transportation Board, will help decide where that money will go:



Larry Abraham, MTB Chair

1. Maintain and preserve the existing transportation infrastructure
2. Provide the safest travel possible for all modes: auto, transit, bicycle and walking
3. Provide choices in access and mobility for people and good
4. Manage existing systems to maximize our return on investments
5. Provide transportation that supports local land use planning and community goals
6. Respect and protect our natural and cultural environment
7. Provide transportation security



Technical staffs from local government agencies participate in an MTP workshop at MRCOG

With more and more people moving into this region, economic activities booming, and commuter rail offering new transportation options, planning for the future is now more important than ever.

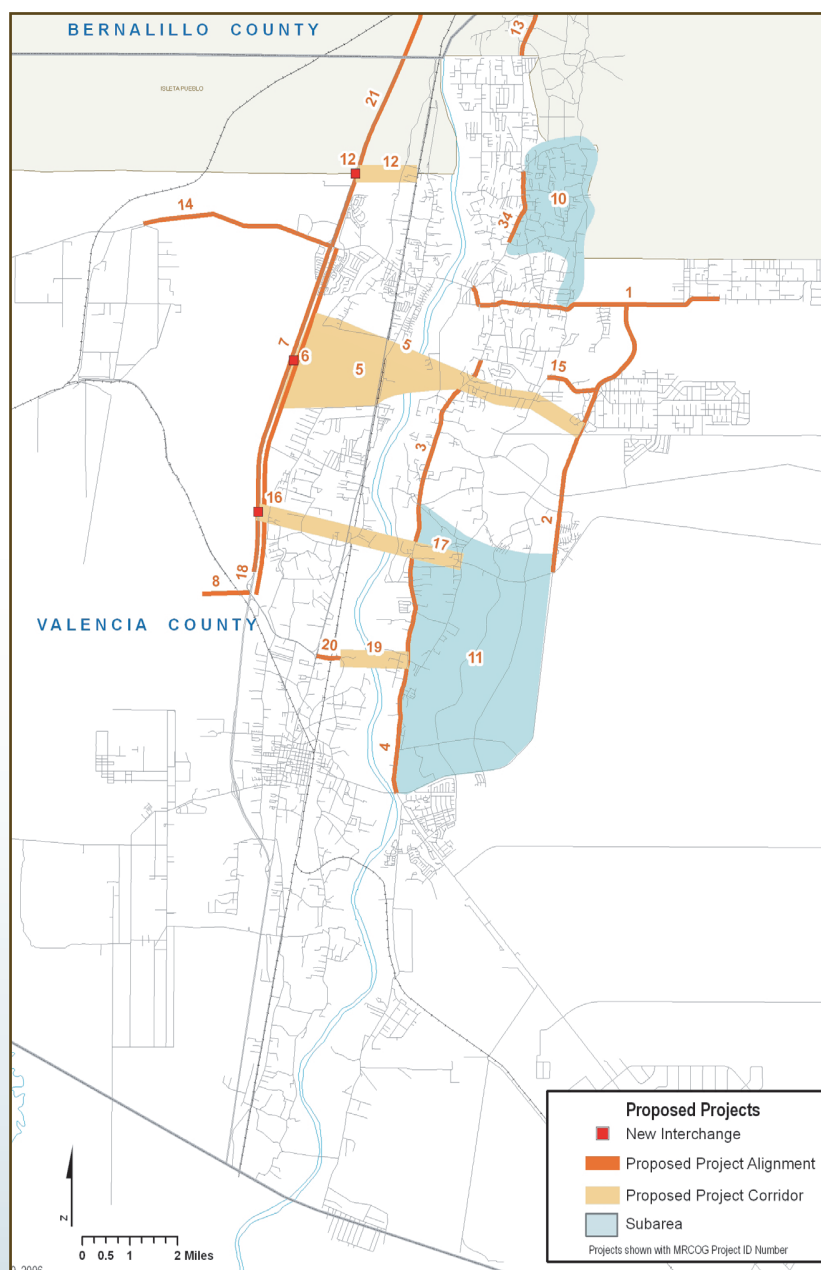
Long Range Transportation Plan for Valencia County

Members of MRCOG in Valencia County worked together during this past year to come to consensus on a long range transportation plan for the County. The Valencia County Commission, the City of Belen, the Village of Los Lunas and the Village of Bosque Farms voted unanimously to accept the Valencia County Mobility Plan as a primary tool for guiding transportation decisions in the County. In addition, Isleta Pueblo played a critical role in developing the final Plan.

The Mobility Plan, which was developed by the MRCOG under contract with the NMDOT, took approximately 15 months to complete. It included a goal-setting process and extensive public involvement throughout that time period.

The plan identifies projects to address transportation needs in Valencia County from 2005 to 2025, keeping in mind the needs of bicycle, pedestrian, equestrian, public transportation, and motorized vehicle users. This list of projects can now be used to initiate discussions between local, state, and federal officials about Valencia County's transportation needs, and the most effective ways of funding those needs.

MRCOG will continue working with citizens, local staff and elected officials of Valencia County as they come together to make the projects in the plan a reality.



Since the formation of the Mid-Region Transit District was approved by the New Mexico Transportation Commission during its March 29, 2006 meeting in Las Cruces -- the culmination of a year long process -- the Board of Directors has been very busy in establishing a solid foundation for regional transit service.

One of the first activities of the Board of Directors was to select its leadership team for the coming year. Mayor Kevin Jackson of Rio Rancho was elected as the first chairman of the board and Mayor Wayne Ake of Bosque Farms as the first vice-chairman of the board. Another important early action by the Board was the adoption of a Code of Ethics - Code of Standards.

The MRTD now includes 11 members; in May the Board of Directors unanimously approved the Village of Corrales' request to join the District, whose members also include the counties of Sandoval, Bernalillo and Valencia; cities of Rio Rancho, Albuquerque and Belen; town of Bernalillo; and villages of Los Ranchos de Albuquerque, Los Lunas and Bosque Farms.

The New Mexico Department of Transportation has made \$250,000 available to the MRTD for the development of a 10-year service and financial plan. A request-for-proposals was issued and the consulting firm of HDR

was selected as the prime consultant. A contract was signed in July. Public outreach meetings will begin this autumn. The study area for this effort are the counties of Torrance, Valencia, Bernalillo, and Sandoval, and will include working with Laguna Pueblo on transit connections from the pueblo to the Albuquerque area.



Kevin Jackson, MRTD Chair

Notwithstanding the service planning effort, the MRTD is actively pursuing the implementation of regional transit improvements. Mayor Jackson worked with Mayor Martin Chávez of Albuquerque, Sandoval County Commission Chairman Jack Thomas, and New Mexico Department of Transportation Secretary Rhonda Faught and MRCOG Executive Director Lawrence Rael to fund shuttle bus service from Rio Rancho to the Los Ranchos / Journal Center Rail Runner station with continuing service to Jefferson Boulevard. The NMDOT is also funding the shuttle bus service from the Sandoval County / U.S. 550 Rail Runner station to the Sprint Call Service Center and on to the Sandoval County judicial complex.

A lot of activity - with more to come!

"United We Ride"

United We Ride - New Mexico is a program aimed at developing a statewide plan for coordinated transportation services. MRCOG is taking the lead for the development of a specific implementation plan with the four-county pilot project area of Valencia, Bernalillo, Sandoval and Torrance Counties. Additionally, the state departments of Transportation and Human Services are co-chairing a "United We Ride" working group.

SAFETEA-LU, the recently passed federal surface transportation reauthorization bill, requires that urban and rural areas develop a coordinated transportation plan before any entity can apply for funding from the Federal Transit Administration. MRCOG and ABQ Ride have formed a working group with an initial 25 members, whose responsibility it is to draft a coordinated transportation plan for the four-county area. This effort is being assisted by the consulting firm of Nelson/Nygaard. Public outreach activities will begin during late summer/early fall.



A conceptual drawing of the Intelligent Transportation Systems Center soon to be built in the MRCOG basement

Intelligent Transportation Center

Work continues on construction of the Intelligent Transportation Systems Center (ITC) in the lower level of the MRCOG building, which will house NMDOT staff. This work is the result of an agreement between the NMDOT, MRCOG, and local governments in the region to manage traffic flows on the region's principal roadways.

Renovations of the lower level of the MRCOG area is proceeding to include offices for the NMDOT's ITS Bureau which will staff the ITC. Work is almost complete on the core area in which there will be several consoles, a conference room, and a video wall.

The center will initially be used to monitor traffic flows on Albuquerque's interstate system via video surveillance and traffic monitoring devices. Later, it will be expanded to other major roadways in the area.

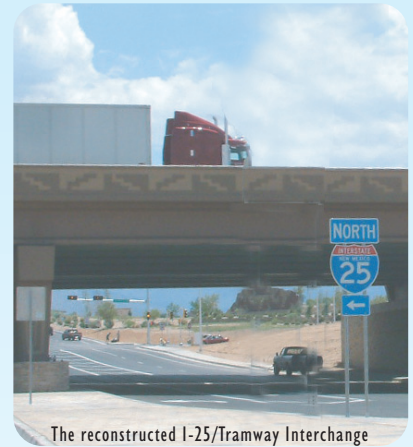
The ITC will also be used to issue messages to Variable Message Signs on the interstates.

This center is part of a multi-year, multi-million dollar investment in ITS in the Albuquerque Metro area designed to maximize the performance of the interstate and primary arterial street system in the region. Another important function of the center will be its ability to disseminate real-time information to the traveling public regarding weather, crashes and other traffic-related incidents.

Major Regional Projects

After many long months of construction, and several years of planning and project development, there are two major improvements to the region's highway infrastructure.

At a May 25th ceremony, Governor Bill Richardson and State Transportation Secretary Rhonda Faught, joined by city and county officials, opened the Interstate-40/Coors Interchange for traffic. Then on June 29th, 50 years after President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the Federal Aid Highway Act that paved the way for the interstate system as we know it today, Secretary Faught opened the newly reconstructed Interstate-25/Tramway Interchange.



MRCOG played a substantial role in both projects by providing technical expertise during the planning phases as well as coordination to ensure the funding was programmed appropriately.

The \$15.5 million I-25/Tramway Interchange reconstruction, which was funded through Governor Richardson's Investment Partnership or GRIP, created three lanes on I-25 at the interchange and widened Tramway Road just beneath the interstate.

The \$91 million I-40/Coors Interchange reconstruction project is one of the biggest GRIP projects in the state and features safety and access improvements as well as pedestrian bridges, bicycle routes, and improved lanes for public transportation.



Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico



The New Mexico Workforce Connection One-Stop Centers have really made some great connections with employers in the Central Region in the past year. In fact, employer awareness of the One-Stops has grown tremendously. Well-recognized names such as Merillat Cabinets, Tom Growney Equipment, Verizon, Gerald Martin Construction, Executives Association of Greater Albuquerque, and US Cotton are now among the ranks of those eager to make a Workforce Connection.

In particular, the Belen One-Stop has successfully applied a unique array of services by combining the strengths of 19 agencies designed to help businesses find skilled workers and help job seekers gain education and training. Because of Belen's One-Stop efforts, their counterparts in the region are looking at implementing the same service structure.

Contributing to the success of meeting employer business/workforce needs is the diligent and ardent support of the many One-Stop partners. Those partners include YDI, Wagner Peyser, Job Corp, USDOL Veterans, Vocational Rehabilitation, as well as economic development teams in Valencia, Torrance, Sandoval, and Bernalillo Counties.

The efforts of Workforce were recently highlighted when the 2006 Recognition of Excellence Award from the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration was awarded to Manpower, a world leader in the employment service industry, for its workforce development program. Workforce was one of the contributing agencies in this important program.

Several other key initiatives have been implemented to further promote the New Mexico Workforce Connection over the past year. One of the most important perhaps is the implementation of "State Branding". WCCNM has acquired a wide array of promotional items to hand out. And thanks to some new and updated signage, the One-Stop Centers are now more visible to those they serve in their respective communities. Also, drafts have been completed of the Central Areas Business Plan for each of the four counties in the region. To cap off the effort, members of BEDOSS (Building and Employer Driven One-Stop System) are taking lead roles in acting as business liaisons between local business and the New Mexico Workforce Connection. This "passion to make a difference" approach is already showing benefit in the business community.

As the New Mexico Workforce Connection and Workforce Investment Act teams moves forward with many new and challenging initiatives for the year ahead, there are a number of exciting collaborative efforts already underway:



John Sapien, WCCNM Chair

- 2006 Summer Youth Academy
- Call Center Alliance
- Call Center Academy
- Regional Manufacturing Alliance
- Association of General Contractors
- New Mexico Hospitals Healthcare Association



In an effort to reach out to the communities it serves, WCCNM is currently developing a new website designed to give employers a fresh and exciting virtual tour of the various Workforce activities and services.

Mid-Region Council of Governments

Board of Directors' Membership Roster

Don Leonard, Sandoval County Commissioner (new MRCOG Chair)
Larry Abraham, Mayor, Village of Los Ranchos de Albuquerque
Jack Thomas, Chairman, Sandoval County Commission
Donald Lopez, Trustee, Village of Los Ranchos de Albuquerque
Bruce Perlman, CAO, City of Albuquerque
Michael Cadigan, Councilor, City of Albuquerque
Martin Heinrich, President, Albuquerque City Council
Debbie O'Malley, Councilor, City of Albuquerque
Ken Sanchez, Councilor, City of Albuquerque
Brad Winter, Councilor, City of Albuquerque
Dan Lyon, Board Member, Albuquerque Metropolitan Arroyo Flood Control Authority
Robert Lucero, Board Member, Albuquerque Public Schools
A. Terese Ulivarri, Councilor, City of Belen
Ronnie Torres, Mayor, City of Belen
Patricia Chavez, Mayor, Town of Bernalillo
Alan Armijo, Chairman, Bernalillo County Commission
E. Tim Cummins, Commissioner, Bernalillo County
Thaddeus Lucero, Manager, Bernalillo County
Wayne Ake, Mayor, Village of Bosque Farms
Phillip Gasteyer, Mayor, Village of Corrales
Rick Velarde, Mayor, Village of Cuba
Bob Stearley, Mayor, Town of Edgewood
John G. Phillips III, Mayor, Village of Encino
A.W. Dolman, Councilor, Village of Encino
Martin Hibbs, Mayor, Town of Estancia
Chris Pohl, County Assessor, Town of Estancia
John Garcia, Mayor, Village of Jemez Springs
Wanona Maestas, Trustee, Village of Jemez Springs
Louis Huning, Mayor, Village of Los Lunas
Art Mondragon, Director of Community Development, Village of Los Lunas
William Moffatt, Deputy Superintendent, Los Lunas Public Schools
Hector Gonzales, Board Member, Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District
M. Steven Anaya, Councilor, City of Moriarty
Adan Encinias, Mayor, City of Moriarty
Vel Gilley, Mayor, Town of Mountainair
Jesse Davidson, Planning & Zoning Commissioner, Town of Mountainair
Kevin Jackson, Mayor, City of Rio Rancho
Larry Naranjo, Councilor, City of Rio Rancho
Lisa Cour, Board Member, Rio Rancho Public Schools
Steve House, Board Member, Southern Sandoval County Arroyo Flood Control Authority
Gloria Chavez, Mayor, Village of Tijeras
Bob Ayre, Manager, Torrance County
Patricia Lincoln, Torrance County
Mary Andersen, Commissioner, Valencia County
Ron Gentry, Commissioner, Valencia County
Robert Chavez, Mayor, Village of Willard
Tari Fylte, Clerk, Village of Willard
Leonard Armijo, Governor, Pueblo of Santa Ana

Employee Listing

Lloyd Aragon	TANF Administrator
Michael Baca	WCCNM Computer Specialist
JR Barela	Maintenance
Chris Blewett	Director of Transportation and Planning Services
Jan Borchardt	Finance Manager
Sheila ter Bruggen	Communications Coordinator
Janice Carolan	Special Projects Accountant
Manuel Casias	Planner - WCCNM
Jennifer Castillo	Intern
Dewey Cave	Director of Planning and General Services
Ramona Chavez	WCCNM Manager
Louis Cimalore	TANF Manager
Shohreh Day	GIS/Systems Analyst
Carol Earp	GIS Analyst/Cartographer
Randall Falkner	Regional Planner
Carol Foster	Research Analyst
Ted Gaudette	Information Systems Administrator
Robert Gonzales	Rail Runner Operations Manager
Amelia Handrich	Traffic Counting Aide
Julie Hicks	Special Projects Manager
Natessa Lane	Intern
Rachel Lopez	TANF Accountant
Jack Lord	Transportation Program Manager
Nick Mace	Water Planner
Sylvia Maestas	Accountant
Jocelyn Martinez	Clerk
Mary Martinez	Traffic Counting Aide
Nathan Masek	Transportation Planner
Augusta Meyers	Marketing/Communications Manager
Rodolfo Monge-Oviedo	Transportation Planner
Pat Newman	WCCNM Administrator
Nicole Ortiz	Secretary/Receptionist
Stephanie Paiz	Commuter Rail Planner
Ted Pearson	MRCOG Attorney
Dave Pennella	Senior Transportation Planner
Joe Quintana	Regional Planning Manager
Lawrence Rael	Executive Director
Bruce Rizzieri	Regional Transit Manager
Mike Roman	Traffic Counting Technician
Irma Ruiz	Rail Runner Customer Service Representative
Jerilynn Sans	WCCNM Planner
Diane Scena	Trails Planner
Marla Segura	WCCNM Secretary
Ann Simon	Economic Development Planner
Mark Sprick	Transportation Planning Services Manager
Tony Sylvester	Special Projects Planner
Barbara Thomas	Transportation Secretary
Loretta Tollefson	Special Projects Manager
Jesse Turley	WCCNM Accounting Manager
Josi Vigil	Accountant
Wendy Vigil	Administrative/Human Resources Manager
Kendra Watkins	Senior Data Analyst
Eric Webster	Transportation Planner

